

3 December 2009

**Re: Colombia – Surveillance and intimidation of human rights lawyer Mr Jorge Eliecer Molano and his family**

Human rights defender and lawyer, Mr **Jorge Eliecer Molano Rodriguez**, along with his family, has been subject to increasing levels of surveillance and intimidation. Jorge Eliecer Molano is a legal advisor for human rights organisations such as the Sembrar Organisation, the Nomadesc Association, *la Corporación Jurídica Utopía* (Legal Utopia Organisation) y Fedegromisbol. He also provides legal representation to victims of human rights violations, such as the families of those killed in the massacre in the *Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartado* (Peace Community of San José de Apartado) on 21 February 2005, human rights organisations and defenders who have been under surveillance by the *Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad [DAS]* (Administrative Department of Security), and of extra-judicial executions which have involved investigations in which senior army figures have been implicated.

On 1 December 2009, Jorge Eliecer Molano's security personnel learned that on three occasions in the previous week, unknown persons, dressed in plain-clothes, had gone to the reception of the residential complex in which the lawyer lives and have tried to gain access to his home. The persons refused to identify themselves or to present documents, and when the watchman on duty tried to contact the apartment to see if Jorge Eliecer Molano was present and wanted to see them, the visitors left suddenly saying that they would try to contact him again later.

In recent months Jorge Eliecer Molano's offices have been under surveillance by unknown persons in plain-clothes. The lawyer's mobile telephone has been tapped since 2004, reportedly by the DAS, as part of a general practice of surveillance of human rights defenders, magistrates and political leaders. During the past month, Jorge Eliecer Molano has reported that interference with the telephone has increased. He has noticed strange noises and his calls are routinely disconnected.

In addition, numerous comments about Jorge Eliecer Molano have been posted on internet forums. These have included comments such as: *“Me dirijo exclusivamente al vulgar y desvergonzado eduarda (jorge molano) para manifestarle mi asco, mi repugnancia. huele a terrorista, a apátrida, a dinero de los infelices secuestrados, que le abonan seguramente cada quincena sus patroncitos del monte. si tiene familia, seguramente que caminan cabizbajos. me imagino que usted no sabe qué es honor”* (I address myself only to the vulgar and shameless Eduardo [Jorge Eliecer Molano] to demonstrate my disgust, my repugnance. He smells like a terrorist, an unpatriotic person, with money from unhappy hostages whose bosses on the mountain probably paid him every fortnight. If he has a family, surely they walk crestfallen. I imagine that he doesn't know what honour is). The following text is repeated on several internet pages: *“Queremos dejar constancia de que si algo nos sucede a nosotros o a algunos de nuestros familiares, responsabilizamos a la juez y a su asesor el abogado Jorge Molano, que nuestra sangre caiga sobre estos personajes”* (We want to state that if anything happens to us or our families, we place responsibility upon the judge and her advisor, the lawyer Jorge Molano, that our blood falls on those persons). The author of these statements signs off as Mr Alberto Acosta, which is the name of a retired officer of the National Army.

Jorge Eliecer Molano's partner has also been the subject of repeated followings in the centre and north of Bogotá. On 14 September at 7.00pm, she was followed by a heavyset man who wore black trousers, a bright jacket, and black shoes. He had black hair with a receding hairline, and he

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had sallow skin, with a round face and a large nose. He followed her for several blocks, whilst always remaining visible to her.

On the 7 September 2009 at 11.00am, upon leaving a meeting at the *Colectivo de Abogados José Alvear Restrepo* (José Alvear Restrepo Lawyers' Collective), when she began walking on Seventh Street she noticed a man begin to follow her. He was tall, heavysset, with short hair, light-brown skin, dressed in a white shirt with blue stripes and jeans. After noticing him she entered a busy tobacco shop, where she would be surrounded by people. The man entered the shop and looked around, but upon not seeing her exited through another door.

Front Line believes that the surveillance and intimidation of Jorge Eliecer Molano and his family are directly linked to his work in the defence of human rights, in particular his pursuit of justice for victims of human rights violations in Colombia. Front Line sees this as forming part of an ongoing pattern of harassment against Jorge Eliecer Molano, and fears for his physical and psychological integrity and security.

**Front Line urges you to call on the Colombian authorities to:**

1. Carry out an immediate, impartial and thorough investigation into the harassment against Jorge Eliecer Molano and his family, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Immediately take all necessary measures to ensure that security provisions and services for Jorge Eliecer Molano and his family are increased so that they are adequate to effectively guarantee their security and physical and psychological integrity. These measures should specifically include increasing bodyguard protection to 24-hours a day, CCTV cameras and reinforced steel doors at his residence;
3. Ensure that all human rights defenders in Colombia are free to carry out their legitimate human rights work without fear of restrictions or reprisals.

Yours sincerely,



Mary Lawlor,  
Director